

Health of Home and School.

LEAFLET NO. 33.

ISSUED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF MAINE.

Fire Prevention.

We are told by a celebrated fire chief that fully one-half of the fires in the United States might be prevented if reasonably intelligent precautionary measures were observed. In the avoidance of destructive fires the proverbial ounce of prevention overshadows in value very much the pound of cure.

A Few Points on Building.

Have chimneys built with a view to safety even while they are burning out. The brick should be laid carefully in cement mortar instead of lime mortar. Having the flues lined with brick set on edge gives further assurance of safety, though it increases the cost of construction. Avoid the contact of woodwork with the brickwork of the chimney stacks. Fire stops on a level with each ceiling cost but little and are worth much as an item in slow burning construction.

Oils, Paints, Grease and Fats.

The cause or origin of some fires, remains a mystery. Oily rags and floor-cloths, even in the working department of the household, are a frequent source of fire by spontaneous combustion. It requires but a slight amount of heat to release from certain substances gases that will unite very readily with oxygen and produce flame. Animal and vegetable oils, such as linseed oil, used in most paints, cottonseed oil, machine oil, are household accessories particularly susceptible to any increase in temperature, and in combination with inflammable materials like cotton, will take fire of themselves. Keep oily rags and mops in closed metal receptacles.

Oils, paints, grease and fats should be stored outside the house. Under no circumstances should they be kept in the basement or cellar or close to the stairs. Burn up ham bags, butter or lard paper, greasy cloths from dishes, sewing machines, lamps or fresh paint. Do not put them with any other rubbish. The furnace is the only safe place.

Kerosene, Benzine, Gasoline and Naphtha.

If you must use benzine or gasoline, take it out of doors. Other cleansing fluids are on the market, approved as absolutely non-inflammable. Keep your benzine can labeled. Do not mistake it for kerosene. The vapor given off by benzine, naphtha, and gasoline, travels everywhere and sinks instead of rising. It seeks light or fire of itself in rooms distant from the one in which it is used. A draft is necessary to get rid of this vapor. The open window is not enough.

It seems almost an insult to an intelligent reader to give rules about kerosene lamps. Nevertheless let us comment upon the value of keeping them clean, well wiped off, and filled, so that the vapor has no place to form. When filling a lamp that has just been burning, never go near other lights or fire, lest the already overheated vapor should travel and explode. Buy oil with a high flash test (120° Fahrenheit) if you can get it. And never, never fill a lamp while it is lighted. Many lives have been lost by kindling fires with kerosene.

The Danger from Ashes.

Many a fire has been due to the senseless and careless habit of putting ashes into barrels or other wooden receptacles. Ashes and cinders should be kept separate from everything else. Metal cans with covers are the only proper ash receivers. Watch the ashpile, for it may take fire of itself.

Matches, Cigar Stubs, Etc.

Matches should be kept strictly in safe places and in receptacles assigned to them. Scattered around carelessly there are various ways in which fires may start from them. Lighted match sticks, cigar or cigarette stubs, and pipe ashes, carelessly thrown where there is inflammable material, cause frequent fires.

The Fire Drill.

In every school building, particularly if of more than one story, the pupils should have frequent practice in the fire drill. It would be well worth while, in every household also, to have a bit of a fire drill once in a while, or at least to have a few moments now and then spent in a careful consideration of what to do and how to do it if a fire should start in the home.

A few fire pails for the application of water to the fire at its very beginning should be kept in their places which should be known to every member of the household. It is a cheap kind of fire insurance to keep on hand a few fire grenades or hand extinguishers.

If the sleeping rooms are above the first floor, there should be kept within those rooms a rope which one might use in lowering other persons to the ground or down which he might make his own escape. (See Leaflet No. 34.)

If persons are overcome by smoke or gases, artificial respiration should be applied promptly. (See Leaflet No. 13.)

A predetermination of what to do will be an aid in keeping a level head in an emergency, and a level head is needed when a fire occurs in the home, school, hotel, or factory.

Safeguards in Schools.

The law of Maine relating to fire escapes should be known to all of us and should be heeded by all persons who are responsible for safeguarding the schools. That law provides that escapes from school-rooms shall be kept unobstructed, in good repair, and ready for use. Stairs on the outside of the building shall have suitable railed landings at each story above the first, accessible at each story from doors or windows and such stairways, doors or windows shall be kept clean of snow, ice and other obstructions. In school buildings of more than one story there shall be at least two separate means of egress by inside or outside stairway, and each story above the first shall be supplied with means of extinguishing fire consisting of pails of water or other portable apparatus, or of a hose attached to a suitable water supply and such appliance shall be kept at all times ready for use and in good condition.

The rules for fire protection of the schools of New York City provide:

That all classroom doors shall open into the rooms, thus to enable the teacher at the door the better to control the pupils. That all exit or outside doors shall open outward.